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Evaluation

Report on the assessment of the MDG reports

Note by the Administrator

1. In late 2002, UNDP initiated steps for a rapid assessment of the Millennium Development Goals Reports (MDGRs), of which over 40 have been issued and another 60 are in preparation. The proposed assessment was based on the premise that progress in terms of the number of country reports was not a substitute for quality, especially in terms of participation, disaggregation and presentation. As it is too early to have an objective impact evaluation, the focus of the assessment was on the process – national ownership, advocacy and dissemination – in selected countries.

2. The findings of the assessment are encouraging. Countries have adapted the Millennium Development Goals to their specific context. In most cases, governments have been engaged in the process. Many creative activities have been introduced for dissemination. But the assessment also identified areas where more needs to be done. The linkages between and the value added of various reports and instruments – for example, MDGRs, national human development reports (NHDRs), common country assessments and poverty reduction strategy papers – are not always clear; broader participation, especially on the part of civil society organizations (CSOs), and more open discussion is needed to build country ownership of the findings; the availability and quality of data – particularly disaggregated information – remains a constraint; and country-specific strategies for advocacy and mobilization built around the preparation and dissemination of the MDGRs have to be better defined and executed.

3. UNDP appreciates the thorough and objective nature of the assessment; we have taken note of the gaps and limitations that it has pointed out. We agree with most of the proposed actions. We are in the process of addressing key issues. Several steps are being taken or being planned carefully:

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(a) In the light of the findings and recommendations, we have revised the MDGR guidance note – first issued in October 2001 – through a broad-based consultation amongst members of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The revised note, issued earlier this month, addresses many of the concerns and issues raised in the assessment. We are disseminating the findings and recommendations of the assessment to the United Nations country teams engaged in the preparation of MDGRs.

(b) By helping to create the space for broad-based consultations, and by providing essential information so that all actors can participate meaningfully in the debate, we are contributing to the process of tailored and customized targets in the specific country context. The United Nations country teams are also working to bring more CSOs into the process of preparing MDGRs.

(c) UNDP is working to differentiate the NHDR from the MDGR in a way that responds directly to the concerns raised in the assessment and taps the potential synergies between the two tools.

(d) With the Millennium Campaign Unit almost at full strength, discussions have begun on practical steps to assist United Nations country teams – with both technical and financial support – to develop a systematic, integrated strategy for advocacy, communication and mobilization from the earliest stages of planning an MDGR.

(e) Tied closely to the launch of the revised MDGR guidance note, we are considering ways in which the UNDG can collaborate more closely with United Nations country teams as they work to support country reporting and statistical capacity development. At the same time, collaboration with the World Bank on a training programme is proceeding apace, as is consultation on coordinated approaches to country statistical capacity development.

4. These initiatives provide a sense of the piloting, learning and adaptation processes that we have consciously worked to promote with the MDGRs. In order to transform lessons learned into a usable stockpile of knowledge, we will collect more viewpoints and refine the process; we will engage in more discussions with country offices, governments, and other development partners, including CSOs. The global UNDP resident representatives' meeting in October will provide an opportunity to discuss the issues further with UNDP leaders on the ground.

5. Based on the work that we are doing already in UNDP and the UNDG, I expect to be able to come back to you in January with a more comprehensive briefing on our response to the MDGR assessment.